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Sen. Allen to address funding for firefighter training

Lansing – State Sen. Jason Allen (R-Traverse City) is working on legislation to address concerns that Michigan firefighters do not receive the necessary training due to funding problems.

Michigan appropriations meet about a third of the funding needed annually to support the required firefighter training, according to Beaver Creek Fire Department Chief and Michigan Association of Fire Chiefs Legislative Liaison Ed Holtcamp. Traditionally, funding for firefighter training has solely been the responsibility of local municipalities.

“There is a concern throughout Michigan about the lack of financial support for fully training our firefighters,” Allen said. “We owe it to everyone to ensure that these men and women protecting us have all the training they need.”

The Michigan Firefighter Training Council serves 1,075 fire departments, which represents 30,998 firefighters. Typically, the Firefighters Training Council administers 1,400 courses and has direct contact with 23,500 firefighters every year.

In order to maintain fire personnel levels, the council must train nearly 3,000 new firefighters at entry level each year. The cost of training a new recruit is approximately \$4,400 per firefighter, not including wages or equipment. There is an approximately 8 to 10 percent annual turnover rate in fire service.

“This legislation would fill a tremendous void in training funding,” Holtcamp said. “This will provide a way for firefighting training to move forward.”

The training council offers more than 50 courses for fire service, ranging from basic firefighter to administrative level training for officers. There are an additional 25 to 30 courses that should be made available through the training council. In addition, there are very few continuing education courses offered by the state of Michigan to firefighters.

“This legislation is extremely important for our firefighters,” Allen said. “We need to work collaboratively with all involved to have the structure and support in place so that firefighters receive the training they need to protect us in an emergency.”

Allen is working on legislation to establish a dedicated Firefighter Training Fund. The legislation is expected to be introduced this session.

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